

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9604

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 3176

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PK

SUBJ: BHUTTO ON THE HUSTINGS

REF: LAHORE 354, 406, 416 ET AL

SUMMARY: IN HIS RECENTLY COMPLETED TOUR OF PUNJAB, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO PROJECTED AN IMAGE OF PAKISTAN AS A COUNTRY FACING A COMBINATION OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL THREATS FROM UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBORS AND DANGEROUS DOMESTIC POLITICAL ELEMENTS. SUCH OVERBLOWN RHETORIC IS IN THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL TRADITION AND MAY BE GOOD DOMESTIC POLITICS, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT HELPFUL IN PROMPTING BETTER RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN. THE IMPRESSION THAT BHUTTO CREATES ON SUCH TOURS IS NOT AN ATTRACTIVE ONE AND CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH THOSE HE CREATES IN OTHER SETTINGS. PROBABLY THE BEST THING THAT CAN BE SAID OF THE TOUR IS THAT IT IS OVER. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH HIS APRIL 5 SPEECH IN LAHORE, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO HAS COMPLETED THE INTERMITTENT STUMPING TOUR OF  
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PUNJAB'S FIVE DIVISIONS WHICH HE BEGAN WITH THE ONSET

OF THE COLD WEATHER LATE LAST YEAR. FROM SEVERAL VIEW-POINTS--THAT OF PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH HER NEIGHBORS IS ONLY THE MOST OBVIOUS--THE BEST THING THAT CAN PROBABLY BE SAID ABOUT THESE TOURS IS THAT THEY HAVE NOW COME TO AT LEAST A TEMPORARY HALT.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER IS A COMPLEX MAN WHOSE PUBLIC FACES VARY SHARPLY. THE CHARM AND SOPHISTICATED INTELLIGENCE HE CAN SO READILY BRING INTO PLAY IN PRIVATE DISCUSSION IS ONE OF HIS MOST WINNING CHARACTERISTICS, AND HE HAS USED THIS WITH REMARKABLE EFFECTIVENESS TO PROMOTE PAKISTAN'S (AND HIS OWN) INTERESTS. IN CONFERENCES AND SMALLER MEETINGS HE IS ARTICULATE AND PERSUASIVE. THE IMPRESSIONS HE MAKES IN THESE SETTINGS IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE HE CREATES ON THE STUMP. IT IS THERE, HARANGUING LARGE CROWDS, THAT HE IS LEAST ATTRACTIVE.

3. WE HAVE FELT THIS PARTICULARLY IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS OF BHUTTO'S GRAND TOUR OF THE PUNJAB. AS OUR REPORTING HAS INDICATED, THE PRIME MINISTER TOUCHED ON MANY THEMES DURING THIS TOUR, WHICH IN MANY WAYS HAS RESEMBLED A PROLONGED ELECTIONEERING CAMPAIGN. THERE HAS BEEN, HOWEVER, A FUNDAMENTAL SAMENESS TO HIS PERFORMANCES, A REPETITION IN APPROACH WHICH HAS LED SOME BHUTTO WATCHERS TO OBSERVE THAT WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER DOES IS TO GIVE, WITH APPROPRIATE VARIATIONS, THE SAME BASIC SPEECH IN TOWN AFTER TOWN.

4. AT LEAST AS PLAYED BY THE MEDIA, THIS APPROACH SEEMS CAST TO AN IMPORTANT EXTENT IN NEGATIVE AND DEFENSIVE TERMS. THE IMAGE OF PAKISTAN BHUTTO PROJECTS IS THAT OF A COUNTRY FACING A COMBINATION OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL THREATS FROM UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBORS AND DANGEROUS DOMESTIC POLITICAL ELEMENTS. THESE FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC FOES HAD WORKED AGAINST THE CREATION OF PAKISTAN IN 1947, HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE COUNTRY IN 1971, AND REMAIN A CONSTANT DANGER TO BE GUARDED AGAINST--UNDER BHUTTO'S LEADERSHIP, FOR WHO ELSE HAS RESTORED PAKISTAN'S SECURITY--IN FUTURE. ALTHOUGH THIS RHETORIC IS INTERSPERSED WITH OLIVE  
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BRANCH OFFERS--TO INDIA, TO AFGHANISTAN, TO THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION (EXCEPT NAP)-- AND BHUTTO DOES ALSO DWELL TO SOME DEGREE ON MORE POSITIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THEMES AND BROADER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, THE MAJOR IMPRESSION HE CONVEYS IS THAT OF A PAKISTAN UNDER SIEGE, FIGHTING OFF CONSPIRACIES (A FAVORITE WORD), PREPARED TO SHED ITS LAST DROP OF BLOOD TO WARD OFF ITS ENEMIES.

5. THIS IMPRESSION COMES THROUGH EVEN MORE CLEARLY IN THE TV CLIPS OF THE SPEECHES. BHUTTO DELIVERS HIS ADDRESSES IN AN AGITATED STACCATO WHICH HEIGHTENS THE SENSE OF SHRILLNESS AND STRIDENCY HIS WORDS CONVEY. THE LARGE CROWDS WHICH HAVE BEEN ASSEMBLED FOR THE OCCASION CAN BE SEEN BEHIND FENCES AT A CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER. THIS ARRANGEMENT, PROMPTED BY SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS, ADDS TO THE UNATTRACTIVENESS OF THE SCENE.

6. BHUTTO PROBABLY CONSIDERS HIS APPROACH GOOD POLITICS. IN THE PUNJAB, WHERE NATIONALIST FEELING IS STRONGEST. ANTI-INDIAN THEMES ARE POPULAR AND MEMORIES OF CLASHES WITH INDIA ARE STILL FRESH, PARTICULARLY IN THE BORDER DISTRICTS AND THOSE WHICH ARE TRADITIONAL RECRUITING AREAS FOR THE ARMY. THE AUDIENCES ARE IN ANY EVENT UNSOPHISTICATED, AND BLACK AND WHITE PRESENTATIONS ARE A NATURAL WAY TO APPROACH THEM. BHUTTO VERY POSSIBLY BELIEVES THAT A HARD HITTING ATTACK AGAINST ENEMIES REAL AND IMAGINED IS THE BEST FORMULA TO ADOPT GIVEN POPULAR UNHAPPINESS WITH THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND OTHER RESENTMENTS WHICH HAVE ALMOST INEVITABLY WELLED UP IN THE THREE YEARS SINCE HIS GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER ON THE SLOGAN OF "FOOD, CLOTHING AND SHELTER". NOR IS SUCH AN APPROACH IN ANY WAY UNUSUAL IN PAKISTAN, WHERE OVERBLOWN RHETORIC AND DEMAGOGIC ATTACK IS VERY MUCH IN THE POLITICAL TRADITION.

7. BHUTTO IS NO MEAN POLITICIAN AND HE MAY BE RIGHT IN CHOOSING THESE TACTICS--AND PRESUMABLY GUIDING THE MEDIA IN ITS COVERAGE--AT LEAST IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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SHORT TERM POLITICAL PROBLEMS. THERE ARE SOME IN PAKISTAN WHO DISAGREE AND QUESTION WHETHER HIS POSTURING HAS ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DOMESTICALLY. SOME OBSERVERS VIEW HIS APPROACH AS AN INDICATION OF HIS LOSS OF POPULARITY AND SEE HIS RESORT TO IT A CRUDE EFFORT TO WIN BACK PUBLIC FAVOR. OTHERS ARGUE THAT THE MORE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT UNLIKE MOST OF HIS PREDECESSORS, BHUTTO DOES ACTUALLY REACH OUT TO THE PEOPLE. BUT WHATEVER THEIR DOMESTIC POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE, BHUTTO'S TACTICS ARE HARDLY LIKELY TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN'S NEIGHBORS, AND THOUGH WE ARE AWARE THAT TO SOME EXTENT BHUTTO'S STUMPING IS DISMISSED THERE AS INCONSEQUENTIAL CAMPAIGN ORATORY, IT MUST CERTAINLY PROVIDE AMMUNITION FOR THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING REASONS OR PRETEXTS FOR ADOPTING A TOUCH

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOP.  
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